

SB 387

Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak, members of the committee,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak in front of you today. My name is Keri Hoehne, and I am the organizing director and a union representative for the United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 371. We represent Connecticut workers in a variety of retail, production, and service industries. I am here to speak in favor of Senate Bill 387, An Act Increasing the Minimum Fair Wage. Each day, I meet workers working hard in minimum wage jobs while falling further and further behind.

I am here to tell you about Cesar, a talented full time meat cutter who has worked in a New Haven Supermarket for over ten years. He makes minimum wage, and the only raises he has seen in ten years are when the minimum wage has gone up. He makes ends meet by living in a two bedroom apartment with three friends. He dreams of owning his own butcher shop.

I am here to tell you about Ana, a housekeeper at a Fairfield County Hotel who supports her daughter and herself making minimum wage. She supplements her income with food stamps, housing assistance, Husky, and Care4kids. She wants to better her life and teach her daughter to be self sufficient. She dreams of moving to a safer neighborhood and sending her child to college.

I am here to share the story of Vicenta, a full time employee at a food processing plant in West Haven who has made minimum wage for eight years and shares a small apartment with six family members. They work separate shifts so that everyone is not in the apartment at the same time.

None of these individuals are students living at home with their parents. These are grown adults, working to support their families and perhaps do better than their own parents did. They want to better themselves, they want to own homes, and they want to get off of public assistance. While the economy is improving, and companies are beginning to make money again, that wealth is not being shared. In fact, when adjusted for inflation, today's minimum wage workers are not even making what they were making 45 years ago.

Each of these workers has turned to our union for help. As a union representative, every day I fight in organizing campaigns and at the bargaining table to raise wages for the workers I represent. I will continue to do that. However, the workers in CT cannot afford to wait for victories at the bargaining table. Their transportation costs are increasing now. Their rents are being raised now. Their families are hungry now. Connecticut can and should do better for its workers.

Thank you.